



PREVENTION TALK

INHALANT ABUSE CONTINUES TO RISE

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Most parents are not aware of the popularity and dangers of inhalant abuse. Inhalants are the common household products that are among the most popular and deadly substances young people abuse. Young people are quick to discover that common household products are inexpensive to obtain, easy to hide and the easiest way to get high. According to recent national surveys, inhaling dangerous products is becoming one of the most widespread problems in the country.¹ If your teen is "dusting," they may not be helping clean the house. A new trend in inhalant abuse is called "dusting." The abuser inserts the straw into the computer dusting aerosol can and sprays it directly into his or her mouth. The result can be tragic including sudden death due to cardiac arrest. Parents and caregivers need to arm themselves with current trends in inhalant abuse and TALK with their teen(s). Young people must understand the consequences of their choices to experiment with and use these potentially deadly toxins.

Inhalants fall into three categories:

- Solvents (paint thinner, glues, gasoline)
- Gases (butane lighters, helium, propane)
- Aerosols (hair spray, whipping cream, computer dusting spray, spray paint)

Inhalant abusers use the following methods to get high:

- Sniff or snort fumes from containers
- Spray aerosols directly into the nose or mouth
- "Huff" fumes from an inhalant-soaked rag stuffed into the mouth
- Sniff fumes sprayed into a paper or plastic bag

REMEMBER:

1 in 5 young people reports using inhalants by eighth grade.¹

Inhalants give the user a quick high that lasts only a few minutes. Consequently, abusers often inhale repeatedly over several hours, potentially causing unconsciousness and even death. Other health hazards linked to inhalant abuse are brain damage, bone marrow damage, hearing loss, suffocation, and heart failure.³

Early recognition of inhalant abuse can make the difference between life and death for the abuser. Inhalant abusers often have chapped lips and faces, runny noses,

bloodshot eyes, complaints of a numb tongue, chemical odors on their breath or clothes, paint stains on the skin or clothes, slurred speech, lack of appetite, lack of concentration, nausea, and a disoriented appearance.⁴ There is a common link between inhalant abuse and problems in school – failing grades, chronic absences, and general apathy.⁵

THINK ABOUT:

- Young people state they abuse inhalants because they are cheap and available.
- Inhalants are popular substances of abuse with potential tragic outcomes.
- Inhalants are poison toxins. This is a message young people can comprehend.²
- Toxic chemicals can damage parts of the brain that control learning, movement, vision and hearing.³

ACTION STEPS:

- Educate yourself about the dangers of inhalant abuse and monitor the inhalants in your home.
- Talk with your teen. Give him or her facts about the effects of inhalant abuse and communicate your expectations.
- Pass this information on to other parents.
- Visit www.inhalants.org for more information.

For more information call:

SOURCES:

¹Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2003). Results from the 2003 national survey on drug use and health: National findings. Retrieved July 27, 2005, from <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/nhsda/2k3nsduh/2k3Results.htm#toc>

²Office of National Drug Control Policy. (2002, October). Facts about inhalants. Retrieved July 27, 2005, from <http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/factsht/inhalants/index.html>

³Mathias, R. (2002, November). Chronic solvent abusers have more brain abnormalities and cognitive impairments than cocaine abusers. *NIDA Notes*, 17(4), 1-3.

⁴Partnership for a Drug-Free America. (2005, February). Drug guide. Retrieved July 2005, from http://www.drugfree.org/Portal/drug_guide/Inhalants

⁵American Family Physician. (2003). Is your child abusing inhalants? Retrieved July 25, 2005 from <http://www.aafp.org/afp/20030901/876ph.html>